

Fertile City Council Minutes December 10, 2012

On Monday, December 10, 2012, the Fertile City Council held its regular meeting at 6:30 p.m. at the Community Center. Present were: Mayor Brian Nephew, Council members Dan Gisvold, Linda Widrig, Dennis Hasler and Todd Wise.

The meeting opened with Mayor Nephew inquiring as to whether there were any additions to the agenda. Harry Nohre asked to address the Council with some comments and concerns. Council member Widrig also asked to address the issue of employee evaluations. Both items were added to the agenda.

Barry Robertson, Fair Meadow Nursing Home Administrator then gave his report to the Council. He reported that for the month of November they started with 46 residents and ended with 43 operating at 87.73% capacity for the month. They also provided 22 days of adult day care and delivered 156 meals. Robertson then reported that for fiscal year 2012 there were 32 admissions compared to 16 the previous year.

Robertson reported that the audit had been completed and that he had distributed copies of the report to the Council. He noted that the only significant change to report was that the occupancy rate had dropped from 96% on the previous audit to 90% for this one.

Council member Widrig commented that she had been hearing some negative comments about the condition of the nursing home being out-dated and was wondering if there were any plans to do any redecorating. Robertson responded that they had been doing the best that they could with the limited funds that were available. He stated that the reimbursement rates had been lowered substantially and that they were very limited in what they could charge residents and insurance for the care that was provided. He went on to explain further that \$1 million dollars had been put away in 2001 and since then \$700,000 of that had been used to cover operating deficits.

Mayor Nephew then inquired about the Department of Health inspections and whether Fair Meadow was meeting their specifications. Robertson assured the Council that they had passed all their inspections and were up to code on everything.

Kevin Nephew, Director of Public Works, then gave his report to the Council. He explained that they were still working on the Assisted Living Project and that the sanitary sewer had been installed and had passed the inspection and testing required by the State. The sewer had taken only one week to install but there had been some delays due to the fact that they had to wait for the inspection and testing to be completed. He believed that the storm sewer would be installed shortly and stated that it would only require a visual inspection by the State before it was buried.

Nephew then gave Council member Hasler a copy of the inventory of their equipment that had been done a few years ago. This was in response to a question during the previous month's meeting about whether there was such an inventory. This led to a short discussion about which items are actually inventoried. John Frohrip, City Administrator explained that the only items that are generally inventoried are items costing over \$5,000 and/or having a useful life of five years or more.

The next item Nephew brought to the Council's attention was an issue they had with the communication between the water treatment plant and the water tower. The radio system had stopped functioning for a day or two for some unknown reason. The system was working properly again, but they were still trying to determine what had caused the failure. There was discussion of getting the old land line system reinstalled to serve as a back-up should the need arise.

Mayor Nephew then inquired about how the treatment plant was functioning. Nephew reported that there had been some problems with the chlorine pump so they had to set it manually. The pump was being looked at to see what the problem was.

Kevin Nephew then addressed the Nature Center Road project. He explained that the roadway was being moved to the north and about the new width and right-of-way for the new road. He explained that this would require cutting out the slopes to the north which involved several trees being removed. Nephew then asked for Council approval to remove some of the trees before the bids were let. John Frohrip explained that once the bids were let the City couldn't take the trees out or allow the trees to be removed.

After further discussion, Council member Gisvold made a motion to give Kevin Nephew permission to remove the trees before the bids were let. Council member Hasler seconded the motion and it was carried.

Council member Hasler then inquired about how the Maintenance Department decides when the streets require plowing. Harry Nohre then approached the Council about the matter he wished to address. Nohre stated that the streets have not been maintained very well the last two years. He felt they needed to be plowed more often and that the corners needed to be sanded when they were icy. Nohre also addressed the Mayor in regards to his residency in relation to holding the office of Mayor.

Duane Sannes then approached the Council. He explained that he uses his motorized wheelchair to go to the gas station every day and also to get to the grocery store a few times a week. He stated that he had gotten stuck in the snow a week or so ago. This was followed by a discussion of the order in which streets were plowed and also about the ridge of snow that the County plow would leave across the City side streets when they plowed Washington Avenue.

Kevin Nephew apologized to Duane Sannes and stated that the streets had not been plowed soon enough after that one snow fall and that he wasn't as prompt as he should have been due to circumstances involved with other City projects he was working on. Nephew explained to those present that City staff was in the habit of using the pickup plow to remove the ridge left behind by the County plow and he assured Mr. Sannes that they would be more diligent in removing the ridge as well as the snow on Albert Avenue where he lives. Administrator Frohrip also assured Mr. Sannes that City Maintenance staff would regularly check on his route to make sure it was maintained for him.

Libby Eid gave the Council her report on the volunteer activities at the Learning Center. In October 15 volunteers worked a total of 52 hours. In November 15 volunteers worked 42.5 hours.

Upon review of the Minutes of the November 13th meeting, Council member Hasler made the motion that they be approved. The motion was seconded by Council member Gisvold and was carried.

The Treasurer's Report and Bills were then presented. Upon review, Council member Hasler made the motion to approve, seconded by Council member Gisvold. The motion was carried.

Resolution #12-1-12 addressing the 2013 Levy Request was then discussed. Administrator Frohrip explained that there had been no increase in the levy for the past three years. Upon further discussion, Council member Hasler moved to accept Resolution #12-1-12 Levy Request. The motion was seconded by Council member Wise and was carried.

The next item up for discussion was the final budget for 2013. Frohrip requested that salaries be the first item discussed on the budget. He stated that this was the most difficult part of determining the budget and he requested that two members of the Council take over the task of salary negotiations in the future. Frohrip stated that he was tired of hearing it from both sides. Council member Hasler then questioned how salary negotiations had been handled in the past and whether Administrator Frohrip had been hired to take care of that.

Council member Widrig stated that she would like to see raises based on employee evaluations. Frohrip then explained the legal ramifications of basing raises on evaluations. Council member Hasler explained that evaluations couldn't be done this year in time for passing the budget and asked that the issue of evaluations be tabled until next year.

Council member Hasler then asked the employees who were present to justify the raises currently being proposed. Kevin Nephew explained that the raises for the past several years were to get Fertile's salaries more in line with what other cities were paying. Hasler then inquired whether the employees were involved in negotiations on the numbers that had been presented. Frohrip stated that it has always been a long arduous process that did involve employee input. Lisa Liden then stated that a certain portion of the proposed raises would be for increases in the cost of living. This was followed by a discussion of the many COLA rates that are used and the variables involved in computing COLA.

Grant Sannes then approached the Council and gave them some photographs that he felt were evidence of poor City maintenance. He asked about employee accountability. Administrator Frohrip and Mayor Nephew then explained to Mr. Sannes that City Administration makes every effort to assure that City staff are doing the jobs that are expected of them.

The discussion of salary increases continued with Kevin Nephew and John Frohrip bringing up the increases in medical insurance over the past few years. Council member Hasler stated that raises should not be discussed at such lengths in Council meetings. Council member Wise added that this has been done for way too many years. Kevin Nephew then added that the Council should perhaps do some research on salaries in other cities.

After further discussion on salaries and job descriptions, Council member Gisvold moved that 3% raises should be given across the board. The motion was seconded by Council member Wise. The motion was carried with Council members Gisvold, Wise and Widrig voting yes and Council member Hasler voting no.

The next item up for discussion was holiday pay for Lisa Liden. After a brief discussion, Council member Hasler moved to approve holiday pay of six hours per day for Liden. The motion was seconded by Council member Gisvold and was carried.

Tobacco licenses for 2013 were then discussed. Applications for licenses had been made by The Other Place, Oliver's Bar and Grill, Northside Express, JT's Station and Al & Laura's Foods. A motion was made by Council member Hasler, seconded by Council member Gisvold to approve those tobacco licenses for 2013. The motion carried.

It was then determined that a motion was needed to approve the budget for 2013 that had been presented to the Council. Council member Gisvold made the motion to approve the 2013 budget with salary amounts corrected to the 3% increase that had been approved earlier in the meeting. Council member Wise seconded the motion and it was carried.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Brian Nephew, Mayor

John J. Frohrip, City Administrator